Australian Government

Department of Health

For the attention of:
Infection Prevention and Control Leads
Residential Aged Care Facilities

Dear Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Lead,

I want to thank you for the role you have played in supporting your residents in preparing to receive their COVID-19 vaccination.

As a specialist in IPC, you also have an important role to play in supporting your facility's workers in understanding the benefits and importance of COVID-19 vaccination. Further to my correspondence of 27 April 2021, I am now seeking your support in assisting aged care workers in understanding how they can get vaccinated.

COVID-19 vaccination is strongly recommended for residential aged care workers because they care for those who are most at risk from COVID-19. We all know COVID-19 can spread quickly and widely, causing serious disease. Experience from the second wave, particularly in Victoria, is that one third of people aged over 80 who contract COVID-19 will not survive.

How to support your workers

I have enclosed a range of resources to help you engage with your co-workers on COVID-19 vaccination. This includes:

- A guide on how you can share and promote COVID-19 vaccination with workers. The guide includes key information you can adapt as appropriate to use for a staff presentation, or to include in internal communications such as staff e-bulletins.
- Common questions and answers you can use as a reference in responding to queries from workers.
- Posters for display (in English and translated in 19 other languages)
- Fact sheet for workers (in English and translated in 19 other languages)

I encourage you to place the posters and fact sheets in a common area for your co-workers to review and discuss COVID-19 vaccination.

Some facilities are considering holding vaccination clinics on-site and so I encourage you to discuss with your facility manager if this is being considered.

How workers in residential aged care can get a COVID-19 vaccine

The key piece of information I'd like to make sure you are aware of is how you and your co-workers can access a COVID-19 vaccine. It really is easy and there are a range of options.

As is the case with all people living in Australia, workers in residential aged care will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine depending on their age:

- People aged 50 years and over will receive the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, and
- People aged under 50 years will receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

There are a number of ways for residential aged care workers to get a COVID-19 vaccination including:

- Workers 50 years and over can access an AstraZeneca vaccine now by visiting a general practice, GP respiratory clinic (Commonwealth vaccination clinic) or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Service. People can find a clinic through the eligibility checker at health.gov.au.

- Workers aged under 50 years can access a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at Commonwealth-run vaccination clinics. Facilities will be provided with booking information via email when these are available in their region. The first four clinics are based in the Sydney region, with others planned around Australia.

- Workers can access a COVID-19 vaccine in line with their age group at AstraZeneca or Pfizer state and territory vaccination clinics. Arrangements by state and territory vary – the eligibility checker at health.gov.au provides the latest information, and your facility might also be contacted directly by your relevant state or territory health department.

- Workers can access a COVID-19 vaccine at their workplace if their facility chooses to put in place a vaccination clinic. Your facility manager will let you know if they are making plans to have a clinic on-site.

Workers at some regional or remote facilities may be vaccinated as part of a whole-of-community approach. Facilities in these areas will be informed of alternate arrangements when available.

Questions

If you have questions about the vaccination rollout for residents in residential aged care, I encourage you to contact your local Primary Health Network in the first instance.

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccination program please visit our website at health.gov.au. You can also call the National Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 020 080.

Thank you for your continued care and compassion for your residents and workers.

Yours sincerely

Professor Alison McMillan
Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer
7 May 2021